C.108.bb.57.

ARTAXERXES.

AN

ENGLISH OPERA.

As it is Performed at the

THEATRES ROYAL

IN

DRURY-LANE,

AND

COVENT-GARDEN.

The Muſick Compoſed by

THO. AUG. ARNE, Muſ. Doc.

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APR

PREFACE.

THE Reputation of METASTASIO, Author of the following Drama, is too well eſtabliſhed in the learned World, to need any Apology for giving the Publick a Tranſlation of *Artaxerxes*, an Opera performed and admired all over *Europe*. But as the narrative Part of this Drama may ſeem too barren of forcible Epithets, which, in reading or ſpeaking, dignify the Stile, it may be neceſſary to give Mr. *Dryden*'s and Lord *Lanſdown*'s Sentiments on the Occaſion, which exactly correſpond with thoſe of our Author. Mr. *Dryden* ſays,— "that no Critic can juſtly determine the Merit or Difficulty of writing a Poem for Muſic, till he has been frequently converſant with ſome ſkilful Muſician, and acquired, by Experience, a Knowledge of what is moſt proper for Muſical Expreſſion:" And Lord *Lanſdown*, in his Preface to the *Britiſh Enchanters*, exclaims againſt that Species of Dramatic Dialogue, which, inſtead of being free, natural, and eaſy, as Converſation ſhould be, is preciſe or formal, argumenting *pro and con*, like Diſputants in a School. He further aſks the Queſtion, "Whether in Writing as in Dreſs, it is not poſſible to be too exact, too ſtarch'd, and too formal?" and concludes thus — "Pleaſing Negligence many have ſeen; who ever ſaw pleaſing Formality?"

Metaſtaſio, in his Dialect, ſeems to affect Simplicity; and from his great Experience in writing for Muſic, has given the following Plan for the Poetry of an Opera, *viz.*

That the Fable, or Recitative, to which fixed Muſical Sounds are adapted, ſhould be ſimple Dialect; hard and diſſonant Epithets (though ever ſo forcible in other reſpects) being deſtructive to Muſic, and, when ſung, for the chief part, unintelligible.—That the Similies be confined to the Songs; and that the Words, which are to expreſs them, be as ſmooth and ſonorous as poſſible, leſt the Compoſer be cramped in his Fancy, and the Singers rendered incapable of ſhewing their Skill, which chiefly conſiſts in openly diſplaying the Tones of their Voices, or running executive Paſſages.

The Tranſlator of this Opera has no Merit, but from his Endeavour to follow the Author in all theſe Particulars. He, therefore, ſubmits this firſt Attempt of the Kind to the Favour and Indulgence of the Public, not doubting that (if they conſider the Difficulty of writing under ſuch Reſtrictions; the Neceſſity of ſometimes departing from the Author, on account of the different Idioms of our Language; and of leaving out many Beauties in the Narrative Part of the Drama, for the Sake of Brevity) they will rather peruſe it with an Eye of Favour than Severity.

The

The ARGUMENT.

Xerxes, King of *Perſia*, having been often diſcomfited by the *Greeks*, his Power began greatly to decline; which *Artabanes*, Commander of the Royal Guards perceiving, he entertained the Hopes of ſacrificing to his Ambition, not only *Xerxes*, but all the Royal Family, and by that Method to aſcend the Throne of *Perſia*; for which Purpoſe, availing himſelf of the Advantage which his Familiarity and Friendſhip with the King gave him, he entered, at dead of Night, the Apartment of *Xerxes*, and ſlew him.

He afterwards ſo irritated the young Princes againſt one another, that *Artaxerxes*, one of the ſaid Princes, cauſed his Brother *Darius* to be ſlain, believing him the Parricide, by the artful inſinuation of *Artabanes*.

Now nothing was wanting to complete his treaſonous Deſigns but the Death of *Artaxerxes*; which *Artabanes* having prepared, though by various Accidents delayed, (which furniſh the epiſodical Ornaments of this Drama) he could not accompliſh it, the Treaſon being diſcovered, and *Artaxerxes* preſerved: which Diſcovery and Preſervation form the principal Action of the enſuing Drama. *Juſtin, lib. 3. cap. 1.*

The Action is repreſented in and near the Palace of the Kings of *Perſia*, in the City of *Suſa*.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

	Drury-Lane.	Covent-Garden.
ARTAXERXES, Prince and afterwards King of *Perſia*, Friend to *Arbaces*, and in love with *Semira*,	Mrs. *Baddeley*.	Mr. *Mattocks*.
ARTABANES, Generaliſſimo, and Favourite of the Royal Family; Father to *Arbaces* and *Semira*,	Mr. *Vernon*.	Mr. *Reinhold*.
ARBACES, Friend of *Artaxerxes*, in love with *Mandane*,	Mrs. *Forbes*.	Mr. *Leoni*.
RIMENES, a General of the Army, and Confident of *Artabanes*,	Mr. *Fawcett*.	Mr. *Du-Bellamy*.
MANDANE, Siſter to *Artaxerxes*, in love with *Arbaces*,	Mrs. *Arne*,	Mrs. *Weichſel*.
SEMIRA, Siſter to *Arbaces*, in love with *Artaxerxes*,	Mrs. *Scott*.	Miſs *Dayes*.

Nobles, Guards and Attendants.

ARTAXERXES.

ACT I. SCENE I.

An inner Garden belonging to the Palace of the King of PERSIA. *Moon-light.*

MANDANE *and* ARBACES.

MANDANE.

STILL ſilence reigns around, ſuſpicion ſleeps,
And unperceiv'd you may eſcape theſe walls.
Arb. Adieu, my love; O think on thy *Arbaces.*
Man. Yet ſtay, ſweet youth; a few ſhort minutes ſtay.
Arb. Ador'd *Mandane!* ſee the dawn appears.

DUETTINO.

Fair Aurora, *pr'ythee ſtay;*
O retard unwelcome day;
Think what anguiſh rends my breaſt;
Thus careſſing, thus careſt;
From the idol of my heart
Forc'd at thy approach to part.

Arb.

Arb. Alas, thou know'ſt that, for my love to thee,
The king, great *Xerxes*, thy too rigid father,
Has baniſh'd me the palace; ſhou'd he know,
That, in defiance of his ſtern command,
I have preſum'd to ſcale this garden-wall;
How little wou'd a lover's plea avail,
When thou, his daughter, coud'ſt not move his pity?

Man. Thy noble father, mighty *Artabanes*,
Diſpoſes at his will the heart of *Xerxes*;
And the young prince my brother, *Artaxerxes*,
Brought up with thee in virtuous emulation,
Honours thy worth and boaſts thy valu'd friendſhip;
Their intereſt may ſoften his reſentment.

Arb. Weak are their efforts, while his kingly pride
Diſdains to rank a princeſs with a ſubject.

Man. My ſpirits ſink, my heart forgets to beat,
I have not fortitude to bear thy loſs---
And muſt we part?--Then all good angels guard
thee?

AIR.

Adieu, thou lovely youth;
Let hope thy fears remove;
Preſerve thy faith and truth,
But never doubt my love. [Exit.

SCENE II.

Arb. O cruel parting? How can I ſurvive?
Divided thus from all that's ſweet and fair,
From her, for whom alone I live!

Enter

Enter ARTABANES.

Art. Son, *Arbaces.*
Arb. My father!
Art. Give me thy ſword.
Arb. Sir, I obey.
Art. Here take thou mine.
Arb. 'Tis drench'd in blood!
Art. Fly, hide it from all eyes;
Xerxes, the king, this daring arm hath ſlain.
Arb. Forbid it Heav'n!
Art. O much lov'd ſon!
Thy treatment was the ſpur to my revenge—
For thee I'm guilty.
Arb. Wou'd I had ne'er been born.
Art. Let not weak ſcruples thwart my great deſign;
Perhaps *Arbaces* ſhall be king of *Perſia.*
Arb. I'm all confuſion—
Art. No more—begone.
Arb. O fatal day!—Unhappy, loſt *Arbaces.*

AIR.

Amid a thouſand racking woes,
I pant, I tremble, and I feel
Cold blood from ev'ry vein diſtill,
And clog my lab'ring heart.

Omitted in the Repreſentation.

I ſee my fair one's loſt repoſe,
And, O! lament the fatal curſe
That he who gave me life cou'd thus
From virtue's laws depart.

SCENE III.

ARTABANES *Solus.*

Be firm my heart.—In the purſuit of guilt,
The firſt advance admits not a retreat:
The royal blood, to the laſt hateful drop,
Muſt then be ſhed. Conſcience, thy checks are vain—
The prince appears,---now art's my only refuge.

Enter ARTAXERXES, RIMENES, *and Guards.*

Artax. Dear *Artabanes*, glad I meet thee here;
Thy prince demands thy counſel,
Thy royalty---Revenge---
Art. I tremble, Sir---
This dire injunction wants an explanation.
Artax. Diſaſtrous fate---Yonder my father lies
Savagely murder'd!
Art. Ah! my ill-boding fears!
Unſated thirſt of empire!
Alas!---Will nothing but a father's blood
Allay thy heat, and quench thy raging fever!
Artax. Well I conceive---my faithleſs cruel brother------*Darius*----
Artab. Who but he at dead of night could penetrate
The palace? Who approach the royal bed?
Nay more, his known ambition---
Artax. O, if here lives a heart that calls me friend,
Or feels compaſſion for his ſlaughter'd king,
Quick let him bring the traitor to our preſence.
Art. That welcome taſk be mine---
Guards follow me. [*Going.*

Artax.

Artax. Yet ſtay---
Darius is the ſon of *Xerxes.*
Art. Who kills the father, is no more a ſon.

AIR.

Behold! on Lethe's *diſmal ſtrand*
Thy father's troubled ſpirit ſtand!
In his face what grief profound!
See he rolls his haggard eyes;
Hark! Revenge! Revenge! he cries;
And points to his ſtill bleeding wound:
Obey the call, revenge his death,
And calm his ſoul that gave thee breath. [Exit.

SCENE IV.

ARTAXERXES *going:* *Enter* Semira.

Sem. Stay, *Artaxerxes*, ſtay.
Artax. Adieu, *Semira.*
Sem. And doſt thou fly me? Go then, cruel prince,
No more ſhall ill-tim'd fondneſs importune thee.
Artax. Beauteous *Semira*, ſhould I longer ſtay,
There's ſuch a ſyren ſweetneſs in thy voice,
'Twould lull me to forget my filial duty.
Sem. Away, ungrateful.

AIR.

Artax. *Fair* Semira, *lovely maid,*
Ceaſe in pity to upbraid
My oppreſs'd but conſtant heart:
Full ſufficient are the woes,
Which my cruel ſtars impoſe;
Heav'n, alas! has done its part. [Exit.

SCENE V.

Sem. I fear ſome dread diſaſter---Say, *Rimenes*,
What means this ſtrange confuſion in the prince?
Rim. *Xerxes* is ſlain——
Suſpicion points the finger at *Darius*:
And *Artaxerxes* bears a dreadful conflict,
'Twixt filial duty to revenge his father,
And brotherly compaſſion for *Darius*.
Sem. O fatal deed! th' effect of wild ambition;
Heav'n knows if *Artaxerxes*' life be ſafe.
Rim. Let fate be buſy in deſtructive ſlaughter;
We, bleſt with love, and ſeated on the ſhore,
Will view the diſtin'd ſhipwreck.
Sem. Think not that love can find a place to enter,
When the ſad heart's ſurrounded with misfortunes;
Leave me, *Rimenes*, to my troubled thoughts.
Rim. Your web of ſcorn is not ſo cloſely woven,
But I can ſee between each ſubtle thread;
Yet, born to love, undaunted I'll purſue thee:
Since hope inſpires my breaſt, what you deny,
Ungrateful maid! kind fancy ſhall ſupply.

AIR.

When real joy we miſs,
'Tis ſome degree of bliſs,
T' enjoy ideal pleaſure,
And dream of hidden treaſure.

The ſoldier dreams of wars,
And conquers without ſcars;
The ſailor in his ſleep,
With ſafety ploughs the deep;

So

So I, thro' fancy's aid,
Enjoy my heav'nly maid,
And bleſt with thee and love,
Am greater far than Jove. [Exit.

SCENE VI.

SEMIRA, *ſola.*

Ye gods, protectors of the *Perſian* empire,
Preſerve my *Artaxerxes*---Yet if he be bleſt---
Semira's ſtate is wretched : *Xerxes* dead,
This prince will mount the throne :
Belov'd by me, and rais'd above my hopes,
The hand which he intreated when a ſubject,
When ſovereign of *Perſia* he'll diſdain.

AIR.

How hard is my fate,
How deſperate my ſtate,
When virtue and honour excite,
To ſuffer diſtreſs,
Contented to bleſs,
The object in whom I delight.

Yet, midſt all the woes
My ſoul undergoes,
Thro' Virtue's too rigid decree;
I'll ſcorn to complain,
If the force of my pain
Awaken his pity for me. [Exit.

SCENE

SCENE VII. *The Palace.*

Enter MANDANE.

Where do I fly?—Ah, hapleſs maid!——
Thus, in one fatal inſtant,
To loſe a brother, father, and a lover!

Enter ARTAXERXES.

Artax. Alas, *Mandane!*
Man. Does *Darius* live?
Or are thy guilty hands
Imbru'd in brother's blood?
Artax. Fain wou'd I ſhun that deed,
Which to prevent, I've ſearch'd throughout the palace
For *Artabanes* and *Darius*——
But all in vain——
Man. See, *Artabanes* comes.

SCENE VIII.

Enter ARTABANES.

Artax. My Friend!
Art. I ſought you, Sir---All is accompliſh'd.
Artax. Ha! ſpeak, explain.
Art. Your father's death's reveng'd,
Darius ſlain, and *Artaxerxes* now
Is *Perſia*'s king.
Artax. Oh, Gods!
Man. Oh, dire misfortune!
Art. Why that deep ſigh, my liege? 'Twas your command.

Artax.

Artax. Alas! 'tis true, the guilt is only mine.
Art. What guilt, my ſovereign?
'Twas merely juſtice to your murther'd father.
Take comfort, Sir;
And think, that, in *Darius'* death,
A wicked, bloody parricide is puniſh'd.

SCENE IX.

Enter SEMIRA.

Sem. Oh, *Artaxerxes!*
Artax. Say, fair *Semira*, why this ſeeming joy?
Sem. *Darius* is not guilty of the murder.
Man. What do I hear?
Artax. I'm ſtruck with double horror.
Sem. Th' aſſaſſin is ſecur'd.
Artax. O quick, proceed.
Sem. Your watchful centinels, when he had leap'd
The garden-wall, o'ertook him as he fled,
His deep confuſion, palid countenance,
And ſword yet reeking with the crimſon blood,
Strongly proclaim him guilty.
Artax. But the name.
Sem. At my requeſt to know it
All hung their heads in ſilence.
Art. Alas, it is my ſon! [*Aſide.*
Artax. Muſt *Artaxerxes* then aſcend the throne,
Diſtain'd with brother's blood?
Oh, I ſhall never taſte of peace again.——
Quick, bring this traitor; that unbounded rage
May execute the vengeance he deſerves.——

Hold,

Hold, *Artabanes*, dear *Mandane*, ſtay.
Semira, leave me not in this diſtreſs.——
Where is my friend *Arbaces* ?

Artab. He was forbid the court by royal *Xerxes*,
For his preſumptuous love of fair *Mandane*.

Artax. Fly, bring him to my arms——I here abſolve him.

SCENE X.

Enter RIMENES *with* ARBACES *Priſoner.*

Rim. Who in this royal preſence would believe *Arbaces* to be guilty ?

Artab. How !

Artax. My friend !

Artab. My ſon !

Sem. My brother !

Man. Oh, ye Gods ! my lover !

Artax. Wou'd in the pangs of death I'd met my friend,
Rather than thus in fetters like a traitor.

Arb. I'm innocent.

Artax. O make but that appear,
And doubly 'twill endear thee to my love.

Arb. I am not guilty, that's my only plea.

Artab. This prudent caution anſwers to my wiſh. [*Aſide.*

Man. But your reſentment 'gainſt the king---

Arb. Was juſt.

Artax. Didſt thou not fly ?

Arb. I did.

Man. This thy reſerve——

Arb. Is requiſite.

Artax.

Artax. And thy down-caſt confuſion---
Arb. Is ſuited to th' occaſion.
Rim. This bloody ſword--- [*Shewing it.*
Arb. Was in the ſcabbard, when you took me priſoner.
Art. And can'ſt thou yet deny the cruel deed?
Arb. Great Sir, I ſtill aſſert my innocence.
Artab. Audacious boy! thus obſtinate in ill,
Thy ſight's my torment, and this deed my ſhame.
Arb. And does my father join in my deſtruction!

AIR.

Artab. *Thy father! away, I renounce the ſoft claim!*
Thou ſpot on my honour, thou blaſt to my fame.
Let juſtice the traitor to puniſhment bring;
His father he loſt, when he murder'd his king. [Exit.

SCENE XI.

Arb. Ye cruel Gods, what crime have I committed
To draw relentleſs vengeance on my head?
Semira! ſiſter! hear me with compaſſion.

AIR.

Sem. *Acquit thee of this foul offence,*
Return with ſpotleſs innocence;
Then ſhall my hapleſs brother ſee,
That never ſiſter lov'd like me. [Exit.

SCENE XII.

Arb. Appearance, I muſt own, is ſtrong againſt me;
But truth is on my ſide---I'm innocent.

Artax. Pray Heav'n thou may'ſt; but till the law decide
You muſt remain a priſoner. [*Exit.*

Arb. Ah, dear *Rimenes*, pity my hard fate---My friend!

Rim. I am no traitor's friend---Adieu. [*Exit.*

SCENE XIII.

Arb. Beauteous *Mandane*, turn at leaſt and hear me.

Man. Away! you ſue in vain. [*Going.*

Arb. O ſtay, I charge thee---
Think on thy former love.

Man. 'Tis turn'd to hate.

Arb. And you believe me guilty?

Man. I am convinc'd.

AIR.

Arb. *O too lovely, too unkind,*
If my lips no credit find,
Pierce my breaſt; my heart ſhall prove
Strong in virtue, firm in love.
Guiltleſs, wretched, left forlorn,
And worſe than murder'd by thy ſcorn.
[Exit guarded.

SCENE XIV.

MANDANE *ſola.*

Recitative accompanied.

Dear and beloved ſhade of my dead father,
Thee I invoke to ſpirit up my rage,
Leſt fond credulity too ſtrongly plead,

And

And turn my purpoſe from a juſt revenge;
For, oh, I feel the tyrant love within,
He rends my breaſt, he ſtruggles for *Arbaces*;
Help me, kind Gods, to tear away his image.

AIR.

Fly, ſoft ideas, fly;
That neither tear nor ſigh
My virtue may betray.
Nature's great call,
That governs all,
A daughter muſt obey.
Alas, my ſoul denies
To hear revenge's cries!
Dare not, fond heart,
To take his part,
But drive his form away. [Exit.

The End of the Firſt Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

The Royal Apartments.

Enter ARTAXERXES *and* ARTABANES.

ARTAXERXES.

GUARDS, ſpeed ye to the tower,
And inſtantly conduct *Arbaces* to me.
Artab. Good my lord,
Think not the partial fondneſs of a father
Has urged this counſel.
Artax. No; 'tis juſtice dictates;
He ſtill perſiſts that he is innocent,
And his fair truth was ne'er till now ſuſpected;
I will withdraw----.
O, reconcile the ſafety of your ſon
With your king's peace, and the honour of his throne.

AIR.

In infancy, our hopes and fears
Were to each other known;
And friendſhip, in our riper years,
Has twin'd our hearts in one.
O clear him then from this offence;
Thy love, thy duty prove;
Reſtore him with that innocence,
Which firſt inſpir'd my love. [Exit.

SCENE

SCENE II.

Artab. So far my great reſolve ſucceeds.
Approach, *Arbaces.*

Enter ARBACES *and Guards.*

And you, his guards, in the next chamber wait.
[*Exeunt Guards.*

Arb. My father!
Artab. Ever watchful to preſerve thee,
I artfully have gain'd from *Artaxerxes*
The liberty to queſtion thee:
Take then this fortunate occaſion,
And, by a ſecret way, which I will ſhew thee,
Delude the guards, and fly.
Arb. Sir, my eſcape
Wou'd riſe in evidence to prove me guilty.
Artab. 'Tis folly all; I give thee liberty;
From the king's wrath I ſnatch thee; and, perhaps,
The public voice ſhall call thee to the throne.
Arb. What ſaid you, Sir.
Artab. Long have you known
The people's hatred to the royal blood:
Away.
The ſight of you will fire the mut'nous troops,
Whoſe leaders to your intereſt are ſworn.
Arb. I turn a rebel! Horror's in the thought---
Your pardon, Sir;---Is this a father's counſel?
Guards, enter quick, bring me again my chains---
Conduct me to my priſon.
Artab. I burn with rage.
Arb. Yet calm this tranſport-----think on my affliction.
Sir---father---turn---O grant one kind adieu.
Artab. Unworthy boy! I'm deaf to thy requeſt.

AIR.

AIR.

Arb. *Diſdainful you fly me,*
In anger exclaim;
All comfort deny me,
And murder my fame.

No grief can the heart
To pity incline,
That bears not a part
In ſorrow like mine,

Nature's tender plea is vain;
Welcome then my chains again.

O rigour unjuſt!
O council accurſt!
Ambition ill-plac'd,
My virtue diſgrac'd;
The pains I endure,
Death only can cure.

Diſdainful you fly me,
In anger exclaim;
All comfort deny me,
And murder my fame.

No grief can the heart
To pity incline,
That bears not a part
In ſorrow like mine.

Nature's tender plea is vain;
Welcome then my chains again.

[Exit, with the guards.

SCENE

SCENE III.

Enter RIMENES.

Rim. Why, my dear friend, ſo penſive, ſo inactive?
Artab. My wayward ſon, that bar to my ambition,
At once rejects both liberty and crown.
Rim. Let us away, and force him from the tower.
Artab. The preſent time may better be employ'd,
If *Artaxerxes* periſh by our hands.---
Let not my friend betray me.
Rim. I, my lord!
Forbid it gratitude! My abject ſtate
Caſt me below the notice of mankind,
Till your great pow'r exalted me to honour.
Artab. Small recompence for thy good ſervices:
But ſhould kind fortune ſmile on this attempt,
Then judge if *Artabanes* loves his friend.
Rim. My hand, my heart, are guided by your will.
Artab. I have obſerv'd thy paſſion for *Semira*---
Spare thy confuſion; and let this great inſtance
Prove my eſteem---*Semira* ſhall be thine.
Rim. Thanks, gracious Sir; my joy is paſt expreſſion.
Artab. Come hither, daughter. [*Seeing* Semira.

SCENE IV.

Enter SEMIRA.

In this valiant chief
Behold thy lord and huſband.
Sem. Cruel ſound!

O Sir,

O Sir, reflect---Is this a time for nuptials,
When my unhappy brother---
Artab Peace, no more.
'Tis my command---reply not, but obey. [*Exit.*

SCENE V.

Sem. I tremble---hear me, Sir---O, if you love me,
Prevent this marriage.
Rim. Sure *Semira* mocks me.
Sem. Tho', by conſtraint, you ſeize my helpleſs hand,
My heart diſdains the brutal violence.
Rim. Give me thy beauty, and reſerve thy heart;
Thou keep'ſt the worſt, I gain the better part.

AIR.

To ſigh and complain,
Alike I diſdain,
Contented my wiſh to enjoy;
I ſcorn to reflect
On a lady's neglect,
Or barter my peace for a toy,

In love, as in war,
I laugh at a ſcar,
And, if my proud enemy yield,
The joy that remains
Is to lead her in chains,
And glean the rich ſpoils of the field. [Exit.

SCENE

SCENE VI.

Sem. How many links to dire misfortune's chain
Are woven in one day!

Enter MANDANE.

Stay, dear *Mandane*---
Why this haſte?
Man. I attend the council.
Sem. I'll too attend, if ought within my power
May help my brother.
Man. Our views are different; thou deſir'ſt to ſave him;
I ſeek his death.
Sem. Is this a language for *Arbaces'* lover?
Man. It well becomes the daughter of dead *Xerxes.*
Sem. Away, thou cruel maid!
Enforce his crime, and urge his ſpeedy death.
But firſt prepare your heart, and quite eraſe
The ſoft remembrance of your former paſſion,
The tender hopes and fears, warm vows of truth,
Fond ſighs exchang'd, and, laſt, the ſweet idea
Of that dear form, which firſt inſpir'd your love.
Man. Ah, barbarous *Semira!* thus to wake
My guilty pity; rebel to my duty.

AIR.

If o'er the cruel tyrant love,
A conqueſt I believ'd;
The flatt'ring error ceaſe to prove;
O let me be deceiv'd.

Forbear to fan the gentle flame,
Which love did first create;
What was my pride is now my shame,
And must be turn'd to hate.

Then call not to my wav'ring mind,
The weakness of my heart:
Which, ah! I feel too much inclin'd
To take the traitor's part. [Exi

SCENE VII.

SEMIRA, *sola.*

Which fatal evil shall I first oppose?
My princess, brother, this detested lover,
The king, my father, all are enemies;
And each attacks me in some tender part:
While I exert my pow'r against the one,
The others rush on my defenceless breast.

AIR.

If the river's swelling waves
Overflow their usual bed;
Scarce th' affrighted peasant saves
From the flood his homely shed.

Tho' he stop one open shore,
Where the waters swiftly glide,
At an hundred places more,
Rushes in th' impetuous tide. [Exit

SCENE

SCENE VIII.

A hall of royal council, with a throne, ſeats on the ſides for the grandees of the kingdom, a ſmall table and chair on the right hand of the throne, Artaxerxes, *preceded by guards, afterwards by the nobles, followed by* Mandane, Semira, Artabanes *and* Rimenes.

Artax. Ye ſolid pillars of the *Perſian* empire,
Behold me fated to ſuſtain the cares
Of my paternal throne, and much I'm griev'd
That my lov'd father's death ſo heavy lies
Upon my abſent friend; but ſince *Arbaces*
Denies this accuſation, let the father,
Whoſe virtues have endear'd him to our favour,
Be the ſon's judge, to caſt him or acquit him:
In him is veſted all our regal power.
Man. In him! does friendſhip ſo prevail o'er duty?
Artax. Not ſo, *Mandane*, for his loyal father
Has double reaſon for ſeverity.
I ought to vindicate the death of *Xerxes*;
But if *Arbaces* be the criminal,
His father, with more rigour, will revenge
His monarch's death, and his own public ſhame.
Artab. Ah, Sir, what trial!---
Artax. Worthy of thy virtue---
If any think me partial, let him ſpeak.
Rim. This ſilence is a gen'ral approbation.
Sem. My brother comes.

Man. Ah me!
Artax. Give your attention.
[*Aſcends the throne, the grandees ſit.*
Man. (*aſide.*) Now prudence guide the reins of my affection.
Ceaſe, buſy heart, to flutter in my breaſt.

SCENE IX.

Enter ARBACES, *in Chains, guarded.*

Arb. Am I ſo much the hatred of all *Perſia*,
That it unites to witneſs my misfortune?
My ſovereign!
Artax. O *Arbaces*, call me friend!
For till thy crime is proved, that title's mine;
But, as a name ſo tender ill becomes
Th' impartial judge, thy moſt unhappy cauſe
I have aſſign'd to worthy *Artabanes*.
Arb. My father judge!
Artax. Yes he.
Arb. I'm chill'd with horror.
Artab. *Arbaces*, in this preſence thou appear'ſt
To be the murderer of royal *Xerxes*.
The circumſtances urg'd are theſe---
That thou hadſt entertain'd preſumptuous love
Of this moſt honour'd princeſs;
For which, by *Xerxes* baniſh'd from the court,
You ſought revenge, and found it in his death.
Arb. Nay more, the bloody ſword, the time, the place,
And flight, conſpire to fix the guilt on me;
And yet my heart is free;---I'm innocent.

Artab.

Artab. Demonſtrate that, and ſo appeaſe the wrath,
Of this offended princeſs.

Omitted in the Repreſentation.

Arb. Ah! forbear;
If you would have me with a ſteady mind,
Support my ſufferings? make not the aſſault
In ſuch a tender part.---Barbarous father!
Artab. Raſh young man, be ſilent.
Conſider where thou art, and who attends thee.
Man. Be ſtill, my beating heart. [*Aſide.*
Artax. But this thy crime.
Requires defence, or a ſincere repentance.
Arb. My king, I find no crime to be defended,
Nor motive for repentance: That's my anſwer.
Artab. O filial love! [*Aſide.*

Man. Whether he plead or not,
He equally is guilty.---Where is juſtice?
Is this the father that ſhould vindicate
His murder'd king, and his own public ſhame?
Arb. Cruel *Mandane!* does thy voice condemn me?
Man. Bear up, my heart. [*Aſide.*
Artab. Your juſt reſentment, princeſs,
Spurs on my lazy virtue.---
Let *Perſia* then, in *Artabanes'* rigour,
Record his juſtice and his loyalty.---[*Takes the pen.*
My ſon I here condemn---[*Signs.*] *Arbaces* dies.
Man. Oh, Gods!
Artax. Suſpend a while, the raſh decree.
[Artabanes *riſes, and gives the paper to* Artaxerxes.
Artab. 'Tis ſign'd, my liege---I have fulfil'd my duty.
Artax. Unnatural ſentence!

Sem.

Sem. O inhuman father.
Man. Alas, my tears betray me.
Arb. Weeps *Mandane*.
In pity of my cruel deſtiny?
Man. Pleaſure may ſtart a tear, as well as grief.
Artab. Now I have finiſh'd the ſtern judge's part,
Permit, O king, the feelings of a father.
Pardon, my ſon, the effect of tyrant duty;
Suffer with patience, and remember this,
The worſt of ev'ry evil is the fear.
Arb. My patience, Sir, begins at laſt to leave me:
Omitted. { In view o'th' world, to find myſelf expos'd
A ſeeming guilty object; all my hopes
Cut off i'th' bloom, the morn of life my end;
Hated by *Perſia*, by my king,
And her whom I adore: to know that you,
Barbarous father,---(Ah, I loſe my life!)
Adieu.--- [*Going.*
Artab. I freeze. [*Aſide.*
Man. I die.
Arb. Stay, raſh *Arbaces!* [*Returning.*
Where would'ſt thou go? Ah, Sir, forgive your ſon;
Behold me at your feet---
Excuſe the tranſports of my frantic grief;
Shed all my blood, 'tis yours,---I'll not complain;
But kiſs the honour'd hand that ſign'd my death.
Artab. Enough, O riſe.
Thou haſt but too much reaſon to lament:
But know------(O Gods!)----Take one embrace, and part.

AIR.

AIR.

Arb. *By that belov'd embrace,*
By this my fond adieu,
Deplore my hapleſs caſe,
Condemn'd, alas! for you.
Appeaſe my love, my truth commend.
Yourſelf preſerve, my king defend.
My ſentence I obey,
To filial duty true;
And ſcarce have pow'r to ſay
A long and laſt adien! [Exit guarded.

SCENE X.

Man. Ah me! at poor *Arbaces'* parting
I feel the ſtroke of death.
Artab. I hope *Mandane*'s wrath will now ſubſide;
For I have ſacrific'd my only ſon,
To ſatisfy her vengeance.
Man. Savage, no more---
Avoid my preſence: dare not to view the light
Of ſun or ſtars; but hide thy cruel head
Within the deepeſt bowels of the earth.
Artab. Is then my virtue---
Man. Silence, inhuman!
Artab. Did not *Mandane*'s rage excite my juſtice?
Man. The daughter ought to vindicate the father;
But thou, a father, ſhould'ſt have ſav'd thy ſon.

AIR.

AIR.

Monſter, away!
From chearful day,
To the gloomy deſart fly:
Paths explore,
Where lions roar,
And devouring tigers lie.
Tho' for food
They wade in blood,
All to ſave their young agree;
Ev'ry creature,
Fierce by nature,
Harmleſs is compar'd to thee. [Exit.

SCENE XI.

Artax. See, lov'd *Semira*,
How Heav'n conſpires the ruin of *Arbaces.*
Sem. Inhuman tyrant!
You firſt deſtroy your friend,
And then bewail him.
Artax. I, to thy father's will, his life committed;
How was I then a tyrant?
All *Perſia* knows my friendſhip for *Arbaces*,
And faithful love to thee.
Sem. I thought you once
A tender lover and a gen'rous friend;
But in one inſtant you have prov'd yourſelf
In friendſhip falſe, and treacherous in love.

AIR.

AIR.

This boſom, a ſtranger to reſt,
Reſentment and pity aſſail;
As both for dominion conteſt,
So both, to my ſorrow, prevail:

My heart, in this deſperate ſtate,
To give each aſſailant its due,
Now bleeds for my brother's hard fate,
And burns with reſentment to you. [Exit.

SCENE XII.

Artax. O, *Artabanes!*
Artab. Lament not, Sir, but leave complaints to me;
I am the moſt unhappy of mankind.
Artax. Thy woe muſt needs be great,
When mine is inſupportable. [*Exit.*

SCENE XIII.

ARTABANES *Solus.*

Recitative accompanied.

At length my ſoul has room t'indulge its grief---
What racking thoughts ſurround the guilty breaſt --
O my dear ſon, forgive the piercing woes,
Which my foul deeds inflict upon thy youth;
I come to ſave thee from the jaws of death,
And pay thy virtues with a kingly throne.

AIR.

Thou, like the glorious ſun,
Thy ſplendid courſe ſhalt rnn:
What tho' the night,
Obſcure his light,
When priſon'd in the weſt;
The day returns,
Again he burns,
The god of day conſeſt. [Exit.

ACT III. SCENE I.

A Priſon.

ARBACES, *in a melancholy Poſture.*

AIRETTA.

WHY is death for ever late
To conclude a wretch's woe;
Thoſe who live in happy ſtate,
Feel to ſoon th'untimely blow.

Enter ARTAXERXES.

Artax. Arbaces!

Arb. Gracious Heav'n, what's this I ſee!
Does royal *Artaxerxes* deign to viſit
The wretch *Arbaces*, in this horrid gloom!

Artax. Pity and friendſhip brought me here to ſave thee.

Arb. To ſave me!

Artax.

Artax. Yes. That ſecret paſſage leads
To life and liberty; then quickly fly---
Remember *Artaxerxes*, and be happy.
Arb. Your pardon, Sir, the world eſteems me guilty;
Then let me die; your honour, Sir, requires it.
Happy my exit, having once preſerv'd
My ſovereign's life, and now his ſpotleſs honour.
Artax. Such noble ſentiments can ne'er proceed
From guilty minds---Belov'd *Arbaces*, fly---
As friend, I beg thee to preſerve thyſelf;
But if that fails---as ſovereign, I command thee.
Arb. In gratitude to thy exalted friendſhip,
I'll quit this ſcene of horror and deſpair.
But oh! Thus exil'd, I ſhall only fly,
Reſtleſs to tread the paths of miſery.

AIR.

Water parted from the ſea,
May increaſe the river's tide;
To the bubbling fount may flee,
Or thro' fertile vallies glide:
Yet in ſearch of loſt repoſe,
Doom'd like me, forlorn to roam,
Still it murmurs as it flows,
Till it reach its native home. [Exit.

SCENE II.

ARTAXERXES *Solus.*

That front, ſecure in conſcious innocence,
Defies the charge of guilt: Affliction's veil
Can never quite eclipſe the inward light,
That from a noble ſoul darts forth its rays,
When in the countenance the heart is ſeen.

AIR.

Tho' oft a cloud, with envious ſhade,
Conceals the face of day;
The ſun is ſtill in flames array'd,
His beams immortal, not decay'd:
Soon the gloomy veil retires;
He darts each pow'rful ray,
And light and heat expires. [Exit.

SCENE III.

Enter ARTABANES, *with a train of conſpirators.*

My ſon, *Arbaces*---Where art thou retir'd?---
Sure he ſhould hear my voice--what ho--*Arbaces!*--
O Heav'n--guards, watch the entrance of the priſon,
Till I can find my ſon. [*Exit.*

Enter RIMENES.

Rim. Not yet arriv'd!
Sir, *Artabanes!* [*Exit.*

Re-enter ARTABANES.

Artab. O unhappy father!
My ſon I ſeek in vain---my blood grows chill;
I fear---I doubt---perhaps in---

Re-enter RIMENES.

Rim. *Artabanes!*
Artab. Where is *Arbaces?*
Rim. Is he not with you?
Artab. O cruel Gods! th'unfortunate has periſh'd.

Rim.

Rim. Suſpicion always borders on extremes;
And might not *Artaxerxes* or *Mandane*,
The friend or lover, have procur'd his flight?
What ſtrange delay is this!---Let's to our taſk;
Behold the way that leads us to the palace.
Artab. And what great enterprize ſhall I accompliſh,
My ſon being loſt?
Rim. What, have you then, for nought,
Secur'd the royal guards; and I, the troops?
Determine, Sir; this inſtant *Artaxerxes*
Prepares to take the coronation oath;
The ſacred cup is by your order poiſon'd:
And ſhall we then ſo baſely---
Artab. O my friend!
Arbaces loſt, for whom ſhou'd I engage?
Rim. Thy ſon *Arbaces* from thy hand expects
The throne, if living; and if dead, revenge.
Artab. That, that alone recalls my fleeting ſpirit;
Lead on, kind friend; my fate depends on thee.
Rim. I'll lead thee on to joyful victory.

AIR.

O let the danger of a ſon
Excite vindictive ire;
The proſpect of a kingdom won
Should light ambition's fire.
To wounded minds, revenge is balm;
With vigour they engage,
And ſacrifice a pleaſing calm,
To a more pleaſing rage. [Exit.

SCENE

SCENE IV.

ARTABANES *Solus.*

Recitative accompanied.

Ye adverſe Gods! y'ave found the only way
To quell my vaſt ambition; perplexing doubt,
Whether my ſon yet lives, awakens fear;
And the dire image of deſpair ſtarts up,
Unnerves my arm, and checks my daring ſoul.

AIR.

O much lov'd ſon, if death
Has ſtol'n thy vital breath,
I'll ſhare thy hapleſs fate;
But ere the dagger drinks my blood,
A murder'd king, at Lethe's *flood,*
The tidings ſhall relate.

Bid Charon *ceaſe from toil,*
And reſt upon his oar,
Till I attain the happy ſoil,
Where we ſhall part no more. [Exit.

SCENE

SCENE V.

MANDANE's *Apartment.*

Enter MANDANE *and* SEMIRA.

Man. Perhaps the king releas'd *Arbaces.*
Sem. No---rather deſtroyed him.
Man. How!
Sem. 'Tis known to all;
In ſecret he reſign'd his wretched life.
Man. O hapleſs youth! O tidings worſe than death!
Sem. I hope your vengeance now is ſatisfy'd---
Or wou'd you other victims?---Speak.
Man. I cannot;
Light cares are ever ſoften'd by complaint:
But ſuch as mine, arreſt the pow'r of ſpeech.
Sem. Ne'er liv'd a heart more loſt to ſenſe of pity:
All eyes in *Perſia* wail his hapleſs fate;
But yours are dry.
Man. The deeper my affliction:
Small is the grief that vents itſelf in tears.
Sem. Go, if not ſatisfy'd, and feaſt your eyes
Upon the ſlaughter'd ſpoils of my dear brother;
With ſecret joy, number his bloody wounds.
Man. Be ſilent---leave me.
Sem. Never; while thou liv'ſt,
I'll haunt thee like a ſpirit, and my wrongs
Shall daſh thy hopes with bitterneſs and woe.
Man. You think me cruel, and denounce revenge--
Ah! how have I deſerv'd thy enmity?

AIR.

AIR.

Let not rage, thy boſom firing,
Pity's ſofter claim remove;
Spare a heart that's juſt expiring,
Forc'd by duty, rack'd by love.

Each ungentle thought ſuſpending,
Judge of mine, by thy ſoft breaſt;
Nor with rancour, never ending,
Heap freſh ſorrows on th' oppreſs'd.

Let not rage, thy boſom firing,
Pity's ſofter claim remove;
Spare a heart that's now expiring,
Forc'd by duty, rack'd by love.

Heav'n, that every joy has croſt,
Ne'er my wretched ſtate can mend;
I, alas! at once have loſt,
Father, brother, lover, friend.
Let not rage, &c. [Exit.

SCENE VI.

SEMIRA *ſola.*

What have I done! Alas, I vainly thought,
Dividing grief, to leſſen my affliction;
Theſe cruel inſults, vented on *Mandane*,
Have pierc'd her breaſt, and not reliev'd my own.

AIR.

AIR.

'Tis not true, that in our grief,
Others weeping in diſtreſs,
To our troubles bring relief,
Making each misfortune leſs.

No, when ſore oppreſs'd by fate,
Better 'tis to ſigh alone,
Than ſupport a double weight,
Others ſorrows, and our own. [Exit.

SCENE VII.

Enter ARBACES.

Arb. Nor here my ſearching eyes can find *Mandane.*
Fain wou'd my heart, before external exile,
Indulge its fondneſs with a laſt adieu.
Perhaps, this way---but whither do I wander?
Raſh man---O heav'nly pow'rs behold her there!
My ſpirits fail me---yet I'll ſpeak---*Mandane!*

Enter MANDANE.

Man. Ye pow'rs! *Arbaces!* and at liberty!
Arb. A friendly hand unlock'd my cruel fetters.
Man. Ah! fly, begone.
Arb. How can I part, forever, from ſuch beauty?
Man. Perfidious traitor! what would'ſt thou with me?
Arb. Am I no longer dear to my *Mandane?*
Man. Thou art become the object of my hate.
Arb. Barbarous maid! my death ſhall end thy ſcorn.
I fly to meet my fate---Adieu---for ever. [*Going.*

Man. Hear me, *Arbaces.*
Arb. Ha! what torture more?
Man. I cannot ſpeak.
Arb. O Heav'n!
Man. Fly, ſave thyſelf.
Arb. What means my princeſs?---this returning pity---
Man. Does not ariſe from love-----but fly----- and live.

DUETTO.

Arb. *For thee I live, my deareſt;*
But if I meet diſdain.
For thee, my dear, I'll die.
Man. *How lovely thou appeareſt,*
My bluſhes will explain.
I can no more reply.
Arb. *Then hear me.*
Man. *No.*
Arb. *Thou art---*
Man. *Divide not thus my heart;*
Leave me---In pity go.
Both. *Ye Gods that torture ſo,*
Some timely reſpite ſend;
When will your rigour end?

[Exeunt, different ways.

SCENE VIII.

A Temple, and Throne, with a Crown and Scepter; the Image of the Sun, with a lighted Altar.

ARTAXERXES, ARTABANES, *Nobles*, &c.

Artax. To you, my people, much belov'd, I offer Myſelf, not leſs a father, than a king:

Your

Your native rights, your cuſtoms, and your laws,
With jealous care I ever will maintain,
And raiſe up treaſure in my people's hearts.
Artab. Here is the ſacred cup---
Your ſolemn oath muſt bind the laſting tie;
Fulfil th' accuſtom'd rites---and drink thy death.
[*Aſide.*

Recitative accompanied.

Artax. Reſplendent God, by whom ſweet *April* blooms,
Thou genial beam, that warms us and enlightens,
Look awful down; and if my treach'rous lips
Have utter'd falſhood, may this wholeſome draught
Change, as it paſſes, into deadly poiſon.

SCENE IX.

Enter SEMIRA *haſtily.*

Sem. Fly quick, my liege; thouſands of rebel troops
Surround the palace, by *Rimenes* led;
Your death is plotted, and your guards corrupted.
Artax. O Gods!
Artab. What fear you, Sir? My ſingle preſence
Shall quell this tumult, and protect my king.
Artax. Away, my friend, to victory or death.

SCENE X.

Enter MANDANE.

Man. Hold, brother, the rebellious crew are fled.
Artax. Say how, *Mandane?*
Man. Led by falſe *Rimenes.*
They forc'd the gates, and enter'd, when *Arbaces,*
Departing

Departing to eternal baniſhment,
His ſingle breaſt oppos'd, and ſwore to die
In his great maſter's cauſe: all dropp'd their arms,
Except that daring rebel at their head;
On him *Arbaces*, like a lion, flew,
Clove thro' his helmet, ſlew him, and reveng'd thee.

Artax. Where's my preſerver---bring him to my arms. [*Exeunt Officers, with guards.*
He murder *Xerxes!* Impious ſuppoſition!

Man. My heart reſpires!

Sem. O loyal brother!

Man. Valour ſuppreſs'd, now ſprings again to glory.

AIR.

The ſoldier, tir'd of war's alarms,
Forſwears the clang of hoſtile arms,
And ſcorns the ſpear and ſhield:
But if the brazen trumpet ſound,
He burns with conqueſt to be crown'd,
And dares again the field.

SCENE *the Laſt.*

Enter ARTABANES *and* ARBACES.

Arb. Behold, my king, *Arbaces* at thy feet.

Artax. O ſtill my friend! come to my grateful breaſt.

Man. Yet that my brother may with better grace
Reward this deed, and ſatisfy the people,
Some reaſon give us for the bloody ſword,
Thy tim'rous flight, and all that wak'd ſuſpicion.

Arb.

Arb. If deeds, not words, proclaim a loyal heart,
Permit me to be ſilent---I am innocent.
Artax. Confirm it with a ſolemn imprecation,
And of a truth, as *Perſia*'s law preſcribes,
That veſſel drain'd ſhall be the ſacred pledge.
Arb. I am prepar'd.
Art. O cruel Gods! If my ſon drinks he's poiſon'd.

Recitative accompanied.

Arb. Reſplendent God, by whom ſweet *April* blooms,
Thou genial beam that warms us and enlightens!
Artab. (Aſide) O wretched father!
Arb. If my treacherous lips,
Have utter'd falſhood, may this wholeſome draught
Change, as it paſſes, into---
Artab. Hold, 'tis poiſon,
Artax. What fury urg'd thee to ſo vile a deed?
Artab. Away, diſguiſe, the draught was meant for thee;
But my paternal fondneſs has betray'd me.
I murder'd *Xerxes*; and, to gain the throne,
Wou'd have deſtroy'd thee too.
Artax. Wretch, thou ſhalt die.
Arb. Then I diſdain to live.
Artax. Mandane ſhall reward thy ſpotleſs virtue;
And thy fair ſiſter ſhall partake our throne:
But for that traitor---
Arb. I will die for him:
My blood is his, and ſhall atone his crimes.
Artax. Thy loyalty and virtue, injur'd youth,
Shall change his ſentence into baniſhment:
Make no reply, his exile is for life.

Man.

Man. Sure Heav'n inſpir'd the merciful decree;
Arbaces and *Semira* muſt approve it:
Tho' for his crimes the father juſtly ſuffers,
His life is ſpar'd, that you, his guiltleſs children,
May not be ever wretched in his death.

CHORUS.

Live to us, to empire live!
Great Auguſtus, *long may'ſt thou*
From the ſubject world receive
Laurel wreaths t' adorn thy brow!

DUETTO.

Of his country ever free,
There the royal father ſee!

CHORUS.

To the patron of our laws,
Pierce the air with loud applauſe.

DUETTO.

Virtue in his ſoul reſides;
In his truth the world confides.

CHORUS.

To the patron of our laws,
Pierce the air with loud applauſe.

DUETTO.

DUETTO.

Pity from the throne deſcending,
How the monarch it endears;
When with juſtice, mercy blending,
In the king a God appears!

DUETTO.

Tyrants claim, with iron ſceptre,
Duty which our fears impart;
But our gentle kind protector,
Monarch reigns o'er ev'ry heart.

CHORUS.

Live to us, to empire live!
Great Auguſtus, *long may'ſt thou*
From the ſubject world receive
Laurel wreaths t' adorn thy brow!

FINIS.

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